



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 6202.0 - Labour Force, Australia, Feb 2016 Quality Declaration

ARCHIVED ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 17/03/2016

### ONLINE COLLECTION IN THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

#### INTRODUCTION

Households selected in the ABS's Labour Force Survey traditionally responded through a telephone or face-to-face interview, but from December 2012 the option of responding through online collection was introduced to incoming rotation groups providing respondents with greater choice and to ensure that data collection remains cost-effective. Since April 2014, all private dwellings have been provided the option of using the online collection.

This note updates analysis provided in the August issue of *Labour Force, Australia* (cat. no. 6202.0) and provides new insights into the take up of online collection, and the characteristics of responses by survey mode: telephone interview, face-to-face interview, and online collection.

#### BACKGROUND

From December 2012 to April 2013, the ABS conducted a trial of online data collection. During this time, households in one rotation group (i.e. one-eighth of the survey sample) were offered the option of self completing their Labour Force Survey (LFS) questionnaire online instead of via a telephone or face-to-face interview. From May 2013, the ABS expanded the offer of online collection to 50% of each new incoming rotation group. This coincided with the introduction of the current sample, based on the 2011 Census of Population and Housing. From September 2013, online collection has been offered to 100% of households in each incoming rotation group and by April 2014, 100% of households were being offered online collection. Interviewer collection (both telephone and face-to-face) continues to be available for households.

The ABS used the initial trial of offering online data collection to one rotation group and the progressive introduction of the offer to other rotation groups, to measure the impact on the Labour Force series of the move to online data collection. Statistical analysis during this period concluded there was no evidence of any reporting bias due to the introduction of online collection. Ongoing monitoring and analysis of online responses has not identified a significant impact from the move to online self completion data collection.

#### CURRENT COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Households selected in the Labour Force Survey are sent a letter and brochure informing them that they have been selected to participate in the survey. Since February 2014, survey respondents have been asked to use the unique user name and password provided in the letter to register an email address and other contact details for the household, or to contact the ABS if they are unable to participate in the survey online. A notification is then sent to respondents who have registered their contact details electronically to advise that the survey questionnaire is available for completion online within a specified one week period.

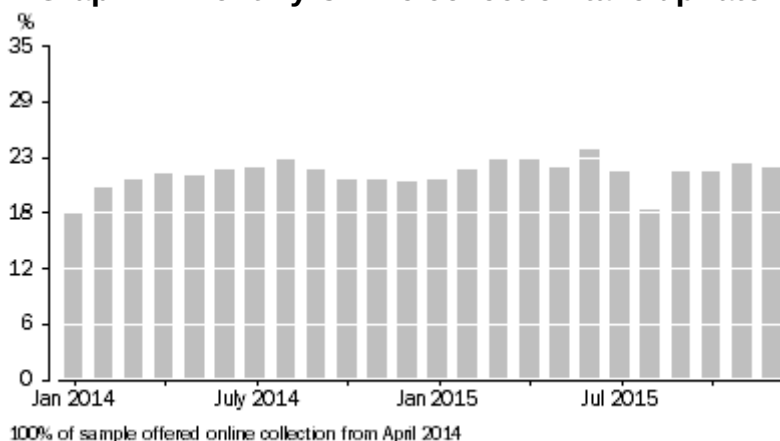
Respondents who are unable to participate in the survey online, along with respondents who register contact details for the household electronically but do not complete the survey questionnaire online within the specified one week period, are subsequently contacted by an ABS interviewer to complete the survey questionnaire either via telephone or face-to-face. This represents an "opt out" approach to online data collection, and encourages survey participants to complete the survey online where possible at a time which is convenient to them.

## ONLINE COLLECTION TAKE UP

Online collection take up rates have been relatively consistent since January 2014 (as can be seen in Graph 1). The lowest take up rate during this period was 17.4% in January 2014 (when only 81% of the sample was offered the online option), and the highest was 24.1% in June 2015. The annual average online collection response rate in 2015 was 22.0%, which was slightly higher than 2014 (21.1%) and 2013 (17.5%).

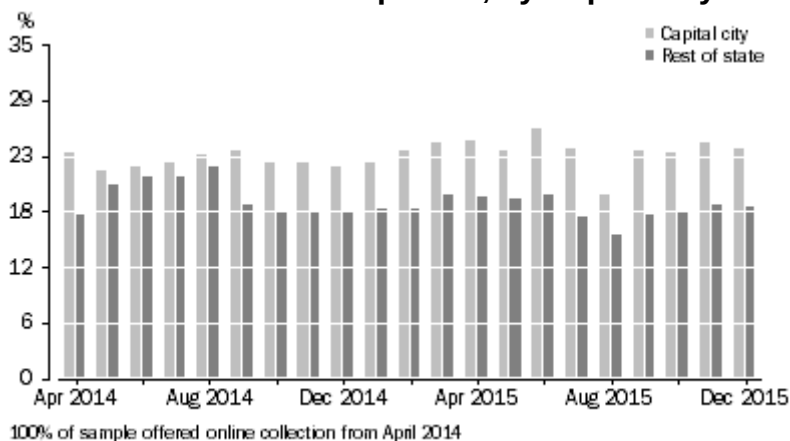
The monthly electronic collection response rate has only been below 20% once since online collection was offered to the entire sample, in August 2015. This respondent behaviour is consistent with changing respondent behaviour across all modes during August, when the Characteristics of Employment supplementary survey is collected.

**Graph 1 - Monthly Online collection take up rate**



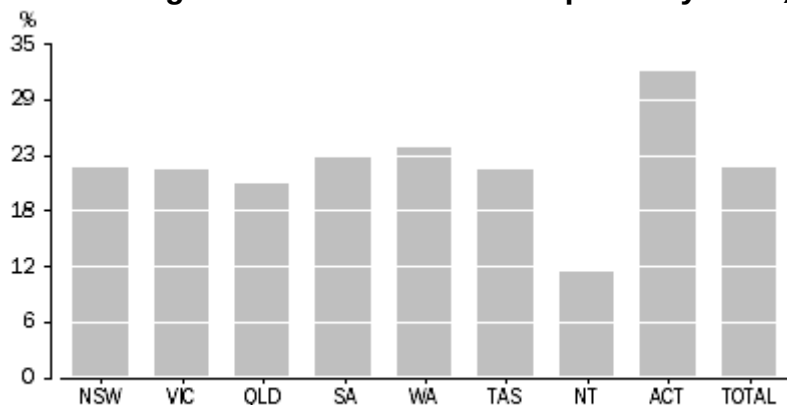
Graph 2 shows that capital city respondents had a stronger preference for online collection when compared with respondents in the regions in the rest of the state.

**Graph 2 - Online collection take up rates, by Capital city/ Rest of State**



Graph 3 shows there was also a higher take up of online collection in some states and territories than in others. In 2015, Australian Capital Territory average take up rates were the highest in Australia (32.1%), while take up was lowest in the Northern Territory (11.2%).

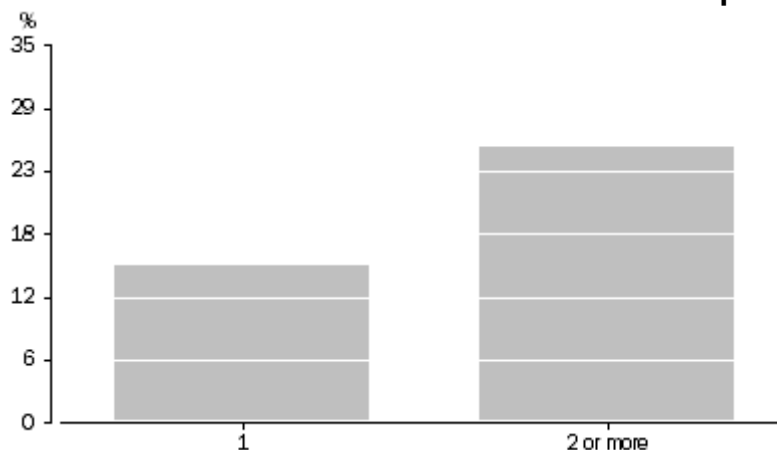
**Graph 3 - average online collection take up rate by state, 2015**



Note: 2015 is the first full year calendar year of online collection available to all survey participants

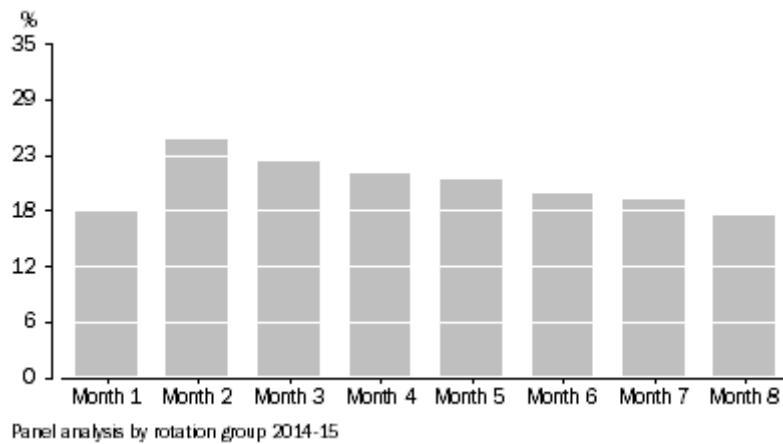
Take up rates by household size show that households with 2 people or more have a stronger preference for online collection, compared with single person households (as can be seen in Graph 4).

**Graph 4 - Household size and online collection take up rate, 2015**



Another notable feature of online collection take up was that it was highest for respondents in their second month in survey, and gradually reduces over the following months (as can be seen in Graph 5). This behaviour was seen across new rotation groups between July 2014 and June 2015, with self-completed online response increasingly replaced by Interviewer-administered modes (telephone and face-to-face interviewing), with a greater degree of interviewer non-response follow up.

**Graph 5 - electronic collection take up rate by time in survey**



Analysis of the characteristics of respondents who choose to respond through online collection (compared with respondents who favour telephone or face-to-face interviews), shows that:

- They were more likely to be female,
- They had a relatively higher participation rate,
- They were more likely to be employed, and
- Were more likely to work in higher skilled occupations (especially professionals).

The ABS will publish another feature on electronic collection in the August 2016 issue, released in September 2016.

---

This page last updated 15 May 2017

© Commonwealth of Australia

All data and other material produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) constitutes Commonwealth copyright administered by the ABS. The ABS reserves the right to set out the terms and conditions for the use of such material. Unless otherwise noted, all material on this website – except the ABS logo, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and any material protected by a trade mark – is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia licence